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# Privacy advocates don't 'like' Facebook's ad plans

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By **Jon Swartz**, USA TODAY

SAN FRANCISCO — A new Facebook advertising format that turns members' actions into promoted content on their friends' profile pages could be a gold mine for the social-networking company.

But, like many new Facebook features, it has stirred unease among privacy advocates and some consumers.

The Sponsored Stories feature became available for large brands to buy last week and is being rolled out over the next few weeks to Facebook's more than 500 million members.

How it works: Facebook members who click the "like" button for a brand or check in at a store could find those actions appearing on their friends' pages as a "Sponsored Story" paid for by advertisers.

The promoted content will appear on the right side of a users' home page where events, questions, friends you may know and other content is located. There is no way for users to decline.

The new feature is merely an extension of Facebook's popular News Feed, says company spokesman Brandon McCormick. "We're taking what is happening in your News Feed and finding a new way to

distribute it so it's easy for your friends to see," he says. "It's another way for friends to tell friends what they recommend."

But the new feature could prove to be a thorny issue for Facebook.

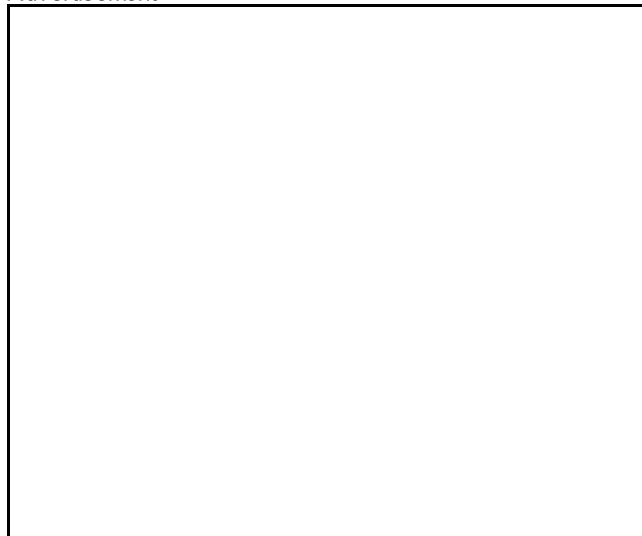
Kevin Bankston, senior staff attorney for digital-rights group [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#), says Facebook is not invading privacy but is violating the trust of users. "There should be an opt-out option," he says.

Facebook's McCormick points out that the promoted posts will keep the same privacy setting as the original posting and will be limited to a specific group of friends.

Some privacy experts say Sponsored Stories won't spark nearly the same reaction among consumers as some previous new functions, such as the check-in app Facebook Places, which broadcasts your current physical location.

"Any time they make a change, people react, especially if there is a commercial element,"

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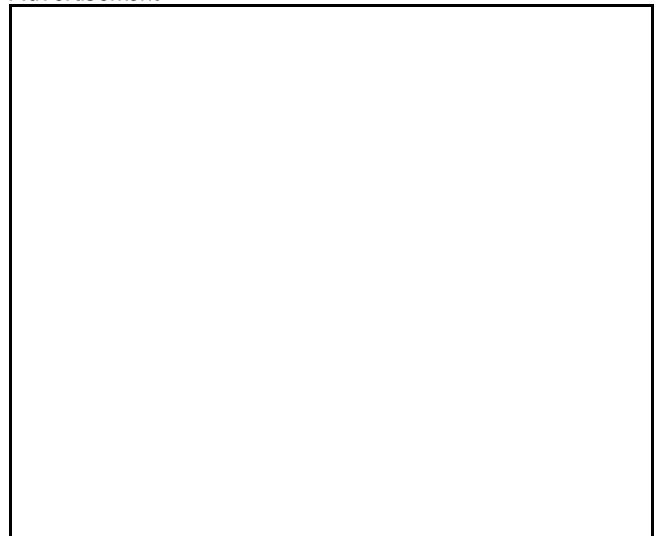
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says Jules Polonetsky, director of Future of Privacy Forum, an industry-funded think tank. "But ... these are things you're actively sharing with friends."

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